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RUEHCV/AMEMBASSY CARACAS 3566
RUEHRG/AMCONSUL RECIFE 6108
RUEHSO/AMCONSUL SAO PAULO 9021
RUEHRI/AMCONSUL RIO DE JANEIRO 3705
RUEATRS/DEPT OF TREASURY WASHDC
RHEBAAA/DOE WASHDC
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SIPDIS

SIPDIS

DEPT PASS USAID TO LAC/RSD, LAC/SAM, G/ENV, PPC/ENV
TREASURY FOR USED IBRD AND IDB AND INTL/MDB
USDA FOR FOREST SERVICE: LIZ MAHEW
INTERIOR FOR DIR INT AFFAIRS: K WASHBURN
INTERIOR FOR FWS: TOM RILEY
INTERIOR PASS USGS FOR INTERNATIONAL: J WEAVER
JUSTICE FOR ENVIRONMENT AND NATURAL
RESOURCES: JWEBB
EPA FOR INTERNATIONAL: CAM HILL-MACON
USDA FOR ARS/INTERNATIONAL RESEARCH: G FLANLEY
NSF FOR INTERNATIONAL: HAROLD STOLBERG

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [SENV](#) [EAGR](#) [EAID](#) [TBIO](#) [ECON](#) [SOCI](#) [XR](#) [BR](#)
SUBJECT: SOUTH AMERICA ESTH NEWS, NUMBER 87

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1. The following is the eighty-seventh in a series of newsletters, published by the Brasilia Regional Environmental Hub, covering environment, science and technology, and health news in South America. The information below was gathered from news sources from across the region, and the views expressed do not necessarily reflect those of the Hub office or our constituent posts. Addressees who would like to receive a user-friendly email version of this newsletter should

contact Larissa Stoner at stonerla@state.gov.
The e-mail version also contains a calendar of
upcoming ESTH events in the region.

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Agriculture

13. Transgenic Cotton Ploughs Its Way through

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Brazilian Congress

DEC. 28, 2006 - In Brazil, cotton is following in soy's footsteps. Transgenic cotton varieties, smuggled into the country in recent years, may now be legalized by a draft law already quietly approved by the lower house of Congress. Now the draft law will go to the Senate, where it is almost certain that it will be passed, because there is an even more overwhelming majority in favor of genetically modified (GM) crops, according to Jean Marc von der Weid, coordinator of Advice and Services for Alternative Agriculture Projects (AS-PTA), a non-governmental organization active in the cause "For a GM-free Brazil". Opponents to GM cotton and maize point out that these crops are a greater contamination risk than soy because there are native species of cotton and maize, but not soy, in Brazil. Cotton grown from transgenic seeds is estimated to cover 150,000 hectares.

Source - IPS News

Health

14. Chile: Too Much Lead in Portezuelo

DEC. 26, 2006 - More than 3,200 milligrams of lead per kilogram of soil has been found in the area around the northern Chilean town of Portezuelo, 14 km southeast of Antofagasta, where there is a lead storage site. "The site should be closed up, and the trucks that transport the lead (to the port of Antofagasta) should be sealed," Hugo Benitez, president of the region's medical school, told Tierramerica. The health authorities have pledged to seek solutions, given that high concentrations of lead can cause cancer, neurological damage, attention deficit and aggressive behavior, especially in children.

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Source - Tierramerica

15. Developing Nations Eligible for European Funding

DEC. 21, 2006 - For the first time, researchers in developing countries will be able to apply for European funding under nearly the same terms as European researchers, as opposed to a limited amount of funding for earmarked projects. The first round of calls for the European Union's USD69 billion Seventh Framework Program (FP7) will be announced on 22 December. Priority areas of research identified for developing countries include health, environment, transportation and agriculture. In particular, the seven-year funding mechanism emphasizes innovation for rapid diagnostics for HIV/AIDS, malaria and tuberculosis, and tests for drug resistance. FP7 will run from 1 January 2007 until December 2013. Information on how to apply for funds can be found at the website of the Community Research & Development Information Service.

Source - SciDev

16. Revolutionary New Aids Drug Tested In Chile

DEC. 18, 2006 - A study conducted in Chile to test a new drug targeting the HIV virus has showed encouraging results in patients. Now, drug company Merck Sharp & Dohme (MSD) is beginning a new study to test an HIV vaccine, and it looks as though Chile will be involved. The initial study was part of a larger drug trial being conducted by MSD prior to presenting the product for approval by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA). Although the Chilean portion of the project was small, only involving 10 patients, the results were staggering. MSD's new drug MK-0518 works to inhibit an enzyme used by HIV to invade the immune system, which it does by

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injecting its DNA into white blood cells. In layman's terms, this drug prevents HIV from replicating itself in the body. In the Chilean portion of the study, the drug resulted in an average 98 percent decrease in the presence of HIV in patients.

Source - Santiago Times (no link)

17. Plans Promotes Traditional Medicine in Andean Countries

DEC. 17, 2006 - An Andean intercultural health plan, which would support research on traditional medicine and help elaborate a regional plan in this issue was one of the main proposals made during the 1st Congress on Traditional Medicine carried out December 8-10 in Lima, Peru. The event was attended by governmental representatives and indigenous communities from all Andean countries. "We need to keep in mind that behind traditional medicine there is a medicinal system that has been used to solve health problems for millennia, in populations that for many reasons are at the margin of western health services," stated Oswaldo Salaverry, director of the National Center for Intercultural Health of the Peruvian Health Institute.

Source - SciDev

Water Issues

18. Water Crisis is Big Test for Peru's President

NOV. 27, 2006 - For the impoverished people living on the sandy desert fringes of Peru's capital, Lima, reliable water supplies and politicians' promises are two things they know never to rely on. President Alan Garcia, who

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took office in July warning of a "time bomb" if Peru's social needs are not addressed, has put water at the center of his domestic agenda -- a risky strategy that could threaten his government if he fails to deliver, such is the clamor for the resource considered a basic human right. Tensions over water in agricultural areas are a continual flash point, as farmers accuse mining, Peru's top industry, of damaging supplies and

threatening livelihoods. Many are skeptical that Garcia can meet his goal, especially given the ailing condition of Lima's state-owned water utility, Sedapal, which loses a third of its water through pipeline leaks and illegal connections. Meanwhile, any suggestion of selling off water companies is highly unpopular after the privatization of water utilities in Argentina and Bolivia went down so badly with local people and both countries kicked out private foreign operators.

Source - Reuters AlertNet

Forests

19. Two Timber Firms Pretending To Be 'Green,' Groups Allege

DEC. 24, 2006 - Two of the largest timber companies in the U.S., Weyerhaeuser and Plum Creek Timber, have polished their public images for years by participating in a program that certifies that their logging is environmentally friendly. But in separate challenges this month from the far corners of the United States, environmental groups in Washington State and in Maine are accusing Weyerhaeuser Co. and Plum Creek Timber Co. of using the forest industry's green-labeling program as a cover while they log in ways that harm endangered spotted owls in Washington and violate forestry laws in Maine. The Seattle Audubon

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Society and the Natural Resources Council of Maine have demanded in documents sent to the Sustainable Forestry Board that it revoke certification for the companies until they comply with standards they have pledged to uphold. The requests mark the first time that mainstream environmental groups have publicly attempted to turn the forest industry's green certification process against big timber companies by insisting that they be suspended from the program, the Sustainable Forestry Initiative, said William H. Banzhaf, president of the forestry board, which oversees certification.

Source - Washington Post

10. Are Brazil Nuts Really Sustainable?

DEC. 20, 2006 - A lot of rainforest conservation initiatives embrace sustainably harvested non-timber forest products (NTFPs) like seeds and nuts as a means to provide income to locals without harming the forest. Operating on the premise that such products are eco-friendly, hundreds of outfits ranging from Whole Foods to the Body Shop to Ben & Jerry's Homemade Ice Cream tout their use of sustainably harvested Brazil nuts and related products. But really, how sustainable are these products? A study published in the February 2007 issue of the journal Conservation Biology suggests that nuts and seeds from the rainforest are indeed sustainable, but only when hunting of key seed dispersers -- especially large rodents like agouti and acouchy -- is limited. The study shows the importance of seed disperser conservation in sustainably managed forest areas.

Source - Mongabay

11. Brazilian Atlantic Rainforest Bill is Approved

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DEC. 2006 - Brazil's Congress has passed long-awaited legislation to save the country's remaining stands of Atlantic Rainforest, the once-vast tropical woodland that retains a patchwork presence in 17 mainly coastal states. In November the lower house of Congress, the Chamber of Deputies, voted unanimously to conserve the remaining 37,000 square miles (95,000 sq kms) of the rainforest, which includes primary, secondary and climax woodlands. Though the Chamber had passed the bill in Dec. 2003, the legislation languished for three years in the Senate, which eventually revised and approved it. Lawmakers loyal to the farming and ranching lobby pressured the Chamber to take up the original bill because they objected to a provision in the Senate version that would reduce the potential indemnities landowners in the Atlantic Rainforest could receive in compensation for the bill's cutting restrictions. In the Senate bill, indemnities were based on the "real" value of property, not the far higher "potential" value cited in the Chamber bill.

Source - EcoAmericas (please contact Larissa Stoner for complete article)

Wildlife

12. Galapagos: Where Eradication and Conservation Meet

DEC. 2006 - Forty semi-automatic rifles. Hundreds of thousands of rounds of ammunition. Seventy hunting dogs. Two helicopters. Imagine a supply list for conservation fieldwork, and it is unlikely the above items would come to mind. Yet these were among the ingredients of the Isabela Project, an invasive-species eradication campaign on the Galapagos Islands that scientists are calling the world's largest and most successful

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such effort ever. The main goal was to rid Isabela Island, the largest link in Ecuador's famed Galapagos chain, of a spectacularly destructive population of 120,000 feral goats. Begun in earnest in 2004, the campaign culminated when organizers announced this July that they had eliminated almost all the goats, which originally were deposited on the islands by sailors in the 1800s to serve as a store of food. For anyone concerned with animal rights, slaughter on this scale might seem egregious. But conservation scientists on the Galapagos argue that the project has been essential in heading off the wholesale destruction of plants and animals on Isabela Island-including local populations of some of the native Galapagos species that inspired Charles Darwin's theory of natural selection.

Source - EcoAmericas (please contact Larissa Stoner for complete article)

13. Colombian Security Gains Aid Field Research

DEC. 2006 - Researchers are hailing the recent discovery of a new bird in a former Colombian guerrilla hideout, calling it a sign that security is returning to the war-torn nation. Ornithologists say the announcement in October of the discovery of the new Yariguies Brush-Finch (*Atlapetes latinuchus yariguierum*) in an area of the Yariguies mountain range formerly controlled by Marxist guerrillas gave them hope they might eventually resume working throughout the nation. New discoveries are likely to follow, though the return of international scientists and research funders is not expected to be immediate. "For the last three or four decades, Colombia has suffered from a reputation as being a dangerous place," says Salaman of the American Bird Conservancy. "Unfortunately, that perception persists among donors because it hasn't been widely reported that the situation here is a lot better than

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before."

Source - EcoAmerica (please contact Larissa Stoner for complete article)

¶14. Venezuela: Birds Blamed for Arrival of West Nile Virus

DEC. 26, 2006 - The West Nile virus has been reported in Venezuela, north of the Orinoco River, likely carried into the country by migratory birds, researcher Juan Carlos Navarro, of Venezuela's Central University, told Tierramerica. The microorganism has been spreading from north to south in the Americas, and can be found in the United States, Mexico, Central America, the Antilles and Colombia. First detected in Uganda in 1937, the virus is transmitted by mosquitoes and ticks, and affects birds and mammals. In humans it causes fever and can lead to encephalitis, and in some cases, death. "An epidemic of West Nile virus is unlikely in Latin America because most of the population has faced dengue or was vaccinated against yellow fever, but we must remain vigilant because the virus can mutate and affect people who were considered protected," said Navarro.

Source - Tierramerica

----- Fishing & Marine Conservation -----

¶15. Recife Shark Attacks Part of a Broader Problem?

DEC. 2006 - The Brazil edition of the well-known Rum & Reggae travel guide has this to say about Recife: "If the pickpocketers don't get you, the sharks will." Over-the-top though it may be, the statement reflects twin realities in Recife-high crime rates comparable to those of urban beach

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resorts such as Rio de Janeiro and a rate of shark attacks that on one stretch of coast is believed to rank among the highest in the world. The coast in question is a 12.5-mile (20-km) strip that includes Boa Viagem, the most fashionable district in northeastern Brazil. Since mid-1992, some 50 shark attacks on humans-19 of them fatal-have been recorded along this

beach in Recife, the capital of Pernambuco state. Before 1992, shark attacks were rare enough to go unnoticed, and guidebooks encouraged travelers to visit Boa Viagem. But the situation has changed, and a key reason is degradation of the coastal environment, says Fabio Hazin, director of the Department of Fisheries and Aquaculture at Pernambuco Rural University. Hazin, who also serves as president of the State Committee to Monitor Incidents with Sharks (Cemit), a Pernambuco agency founded in 2004, cites the destruction of mangrove stands in particular. Mangroves, essential to providing nutrients for marine life, have succumbed in vast quantities to real estate development and other pressures.

Source - EcoAmericas (please contact Larissa Stoner for complete article)

¶16. Trout Aquaculture Booming in Peru

DEC. 22, 2006 - Trout ranching is a new economic activity for the poor Lake Titicaca area and has great potential for expansion. With private sector leadership and USAID support, the industry made great strides since 2004 and will export 700 tons to some of the most competitive markets in the world, including Canada, Japan, Norway and the United States. The current potential for expanding production is considerable, according to Association of Trout Ranchers (APT) executives. The Ministry of Production has authorized 17,000 ha for trout production, of which only four percent is in use. Under a promotional scheme, the Ministry now charges only document processing

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fees to get into the business, around USD120. There was also consensus that the highway under construction to connect Brazil to Southern Peru (passing through Puno) will be important to augment trade in the region. Chilean investors had already set up a number of pens along Lake Titicaca.

Source - LIMA 00004772

Protected Areas

¶17. Paraguay has new Protected Wetland Area

DEC. 11, 2006 - Guyra Paraguay (BirdLife in Paraguay) is celebrating news of the complete protection of over 9,500 hectares of seasonal wetland in the Paraguayan Pantanal, an area which forms part of one of the country's 57 Important Bird Areas (IBAs). The declaration represents years of hard work by Guyra Paraguay and the World Land Trust, which contributed most of the funds required for the purchase of the land through the negotiation of a number of donations from private trusts, as well as the IUCN National Committee for the Netherlands. Five key areas have been purchased and set aside for the Nature Reserve, equating in all to a US D250,000 investment. The Pantanal is one of South America's key ecosystems, being flooded seasonally by freshwater from the central Brazilian highlands. Situated in the upper watershed of the Paraguay River, to the south of the Amazon basin and east of the Andes, the area represents the most extensive freshwater wetland in the world. As well as being important for birds, the Pantanal IBA also represents crucial

habitat for a number of other species. Over 300 species of fish, 40 amphibians, 55 reptiles, 120 mammals and 2,000 species of plant are known to exist there

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Source - BirdLife

Science & Technology

18. Survey Shows Dire State of Colombian R&D

DEC. 19, 2006 - A survey of Colombia's manufacturing industry has revealed a bleak picture of its research, development, and innovation sectors, prompting two science institutes to launch a scheme to try to reverse the situation. Only six per cent of manufacturing companies in and around Bogota have research and development departments, and over half do not rate innovation as important, according to the survey results released December 13. They show that though the innovation capacity in manufacturing industries in Bogota and the surrounding district of Cundinamarca is better than ten years ago, it is still low. To change the situation, the Chamber of Commerce of Bogota and Colciencias, the National Institute for the Development of Science and Technology, have launched a scheme to narrow the innovation gap. This will involve channeling 1.6 billion Colombian Pesos (USD700,000) to 16 research projects in technological development and innovation that relate to five product chains.

Source - SciDev

Climate Change

19. Arlington Takes On Global Warming

JAN. 02, 2007 - Arlington County will buy more wind-generated electricity, give tax breaks for

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hybrid cars, require new public buildings to be green-certified and hand out energy-efficient light bulbs to residents as part of a major push toward reducing greenhouse gas emissions, county officials stated. The county has reduced carbon dioxide and other emissions -- making its buildings more energy-efficient and adding hybrid vehicles to its fleets -- by a total of 2.6 percent since 2000, but must now sharply increase its efforts in order to reach its goal of a 10 percent reduction in the next five years, Arlington County Board Chairman Paul Ferguson (D) stated. The county of about 200,000 has long considered itself eco-friendly, from the macro perspective (a "smart growth" strategy that clusters development around Metro stations, encouraging use of public transit) to the micro (an obsession with the county's "tree canopy").

Source - Washington Post

20. U.S. Wants Polar Bears Listed As Threatened

DEC. 26, 2006 - The Bush administration has decided to propose listing the polar bear as threatened under the Endangered Species Act, putting the U.S. government on record as saying that global warming could drive one of the world's most recognizable animals out of existence. The administration's proposal - which was described by an Interior Department official who spoke on the condition of anonymity - stems from the fact that rising temperatures in the Arctic are shrinking the sea ice that polar bears need for hunting. Identifying polar bears as threatened with extinction could have an enormous political and practical impact. Because scientists have concluded that carbon dioxide from power-plant and vehicle emissions is helping drive climate change worldwide, putting polar bears on the endangered species list raises the legal question of whether the government would be required to compel U.S. industries to curb their

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carbon dioxide output.

Source - Washington Post

Energy

¶21. U.S. Oil Firm Signs Contract for Ethanol Plant in Peru

On January 5, U.S. oil firm Maple Gas signed a USD650 million contract with the Piura Regional Government for a sugar cane-based ethanol plant. President Garcia spoke at the signing ceremony, calling the biofuel project the start of an "agrarian revolution" that showcased foreign private investment. The labor-intensive plant, on the northern desert coast, should produce 30 million gallons/year by 2010. Garcia announced other biofuel projects in the works. The Maple project is a model for U.S investors on how to coordinate land and water rights acquisition with the national and a regional government.

Source - US Embassy Lima

¶22. In the Global Energy Rush, Nuclear Gets a Resurgence

JAN. 06, 2007 - Sixty miles outside Buenos Aires, construction crews soon will be swarming over a partially built concrete dome abandoned 12 years ago, resuming work on Argentina's long-delayed Atucha II nuclear power plant. They will be in the vanguard of surging interest in nuclear power worldwide. Faced with evidence that coal- and oil-fired electric plants are overheating the planet, and alarmed by soaring demand for electricity, governments from South America to Asia are turning once again to a power source mostly shunned for two decades as too dangerous and too costly. Globally, 29 nuclear power plants

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are being built. Well over 100 more have been written into the development plans of governments for the next three decades. India and China each are rushing to build dozens of reactors. The United States and the countries of Western Europe, led by new nuclear champions, are reconsidering their cooled romance with atomic power.

International agencies have come on board; even the Persian Gulf oil states have announced plans for nuclear generators.

Source - Washington Post

[123. Controversial Chile Dam Project Inches Ahead](#)

JAN. 5, 2007 - Swiss mining company Xstrata, one of several large conglomerates eyeing Region XI as a potentially valuable source of hydroelectric power, nosed ahead of its competitors this week in what has been an ongoing race to dam the area's pristine rivers. On January 2nd, Xstrata - working in collaboration with local affiliate Energia Austral - became the first of the competing firms to file an official Environmental Impact Study (EIS), a necessary prerequisite to any eventual construction. Though the Swiss company would eventually like to build several power generators in the region, the EIS it submitted recently focuses specifically on plans to erect a dam along the Cuervo River. The proposed USD600 million project would be located approximately 21 kilometers northeast of Puerto Chacabuco and 26 kilometers north of Puerto Aysen. SEE ALSO "U.S. Environmental Group Opposes Aisen Project in Chile" BELOW.

Source - Santiago Times (no link)

[124. Argentina Announces 2.3-Billion-Dollar Fuel Refinery Project](#)

JAN. 1, 2007 - In an effort to offset expected shortages in diesel fuel supplies, the Argentine

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government has announced a project to build a refinery that will require an about 2.3-billion-dollar investment which will be mainly made by some 30 private oil companies, with the exception of Royal/Dutch Shell, which is engaged in a dispute with the administration. The refinery which has already started to be called General Mosconi II would have a refining capacity of two to three million cubic meters of diesel fuel a year. The details of the project were agreed with Federal Planning Minister Julio De Vido, Domestic Trade Secretary Guillermo Moreno and representatives from Spain's Repsol-YPF, Brazil's Petrobras Energia, and US companies Pan American Energy, Chevron and Esso SAPA.

Source - MercoPress

[125. Brazil to Test Hybrid Fuel-Cell and Battery-Powered Buses](#)

DEC. 2006 - Brazil's Mines and Energy Ministry and Sao Paulo's Metropolitan Urban Transport Company (Emtu) have launched a USD16 million pilot project to put five hybrid buses into operation by 2009 that will be powered by rechargeable batteries and hydrogen fuel cells. Meanwhile, the agency also is developing catalytic converters for its buses to cut down on particulate emissions. The buses, which will get 70 percent of their power from fuel cells and 30 percent from batteries, will be the first of their kind to be used commercially in Latin America, says Marcio Schettino, an Emtu manager heading the project. The effort, to include construction of a hydrogen production plant, is being funded with USD12.3 million from the Global Environment Facility, a multilateral funder of

green projects in developing countries, and USD3.7 million from the Brazilian government.

Source - EcoAmericas (please contact Larissa Stoner for complete article)

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¶26. U.S. Environmental Group Opposes Aisen Project in Chile

DEC. 20, 2006 - Chilean Patagonia, one of the world's most pristine wilderness areas, is receiving major attention these days from a large and very well-connected U.S. environmental group. The U.S. based Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC) recently designated Chilean Patagonia as a so-called "BioGem." The organization is currently featuring the region - together with Florida's Emerald Coast and the Yellowstone/Greater Rockies area - prominently on its web site (www.nrdc.org/). The NRDC, founded in 1970 and operating from offices in several major U.S. cities, boasts 1.2 million members and is linked directly to the powerful Kennedy family. Robert Kennedy Jr., who shares the same name as his famous father - a one-time U.S. senator, Attorney General and presidential hopeful who was assassinated in 1968 - is the organization's senior environmental attorney. Backers of the project claim the electricity it would produce - equivalent to about 30 percent of the electricity currently available in Central Chile - makes the Aisen project absolutely necessary. Demand for electricity, they point out, grows by an average of six percent annually.

Source - Santiago Times (no link)

General

¶27. Sustainable Enterprise in Brazil

January 2, 2007 - The 2006 New Ventures Forum in Brazil gave special awards and recognition to four companies with outstanding sustainable business models: 1) Eletrocell develops hydrogen energy systems that it hopes will instigate the

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next energy revolution in Brazil (the first one being biofuels); 2) Florestas Cosmetics makes beauty products from Brazil's rich biodiversity. Each product is certified organic and sustainably harvested. Whole Foods Market and Carrefour are among Florestas' major customers; 3) Hering Instruments uses wood certified by the Forest Stewardship Council to make high-quality, sustainably crafted musical instruments, such as guitars, drums, and harmonicas; and 4) Ouro Verde's product line includes high-quality food products like cooking oils and jellies. The company is helping to shift local agricultural practices in the Amazon away from extraction towards sustainable harvesting to preserve its rich biodiversity. These companies and six other finalists are proving that green, sustainable business is alive and prospering in Brazil.

Source - WRI

¶28. New Coca Spat Leaves Colombia Flying Solo

DEC. 22, 2006 - A decision by Colombia's conservative President Alvaro Uribe to restart the country's aerial fumigation of coca leaf plantations near the border with Ecuador appears to have further isolated him in a region increasingly unfriendly to Washington's war on drugs. Last week's move has sparked a diplomatic row, with Ecuador recalling its ambassador to Colombia and vowing to file an official complaint to both the Organization of American States and the United Nations. Ecuador's leftist president-elect Rafael Correa, a close friend of Venezuela's anti-American president, Hugo Chavez, has even started recruiting other Latin leaders to oppose aerial fumigation. "It's simply unacceptable that they continue spraying from the air with glysophate," Mr. Correa said this week, referring to the herbicide used, a more concentrated version of Monsanto's Round-Up. "It kills legal crops on the Ecuadorean side and,

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apparently, also kills farmers." Ecuador has activated its air defense system to monitor the fumigation planes, many of which are piloted by Americans. Colombia announced it was sending more troops to the 586 kilometer-long border, to keep Colombian leftist guerrillas from fleeing into Ecuador.

Source - CS Monitor

129. Binational Barrick Mine Wins Key Approval

DEC. 2006 - Plans by Canada's Barrick Gold to develop a massive mining operation high in the Andes have won environmental approval from Argentine provincial authorities, just months after the border-straddling gold and silver project received the go-ahead from neighboring Chile. In Argentina, decision-making over mining projects rests with the provinces. With San Juan's approval in hand, Barrick says construction of the mine will commence as soon as Argentina and Chile settle some outstanding tax questions about the project, with production slated to begin in 2010. However, Barrick's plans have caused debate among Argentine officials at the national level, fueling some speculation about whether President Nestor Kirchner might intervene to halt the project. Two members of the Kirchner administration in particular have questioned the project-Environment Secretary Romina Picolotti and Raul Estrada Oyuela, the foreign ministry's special representative for international environmental affairs. Objecting to Barrick's plans to use cyanide solutions to extract gold from ore, they argue national authorities must ensure the project receives greater scrutiny than that given it by Jose Luis Gioja, San Juan's pro-mining governor.

Source - EcoAmericas (please contact Larissa Stoner for complete article)

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130. Critics of Nuclear Accord Win a Round in Argentina

DEC. 2006 - Green advocates in Argentina have scored an early-round legal win in their campaign to prevent the importation of spent nuclear fuel

from an Argentine-built nuclear-research reactor in Australia. Waste produced by a new research reactor that Argentina's state-controlled high-technology company Invap has built for the Australian Nuclear Science and Technology Organization (Ansto), was to have been vitrified in Argentina if Ansto requests it and returned to Australia for disposal. But a three-judge federal appeals panel in the Argentine city of Bahia Blanca has issued an order prohibiting the arrangement, which Ansto has not yet sought to use. The decision, made public last month, reverses a lower court's rejection of a complaint that a green activist filed to challenge the spent-fuel import regimen. It has drawn a legal appeal from Invap, which means the matter now must be decided by Argentina's Supreme Court.

Source - EcoAmericas (please contact Larissa Stoner for complete article)

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